United Nations

Daily Highlights

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TUESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Lasting settlement in Middle East must be accompanied by economic and social development in occupied territories, Secretary-General says in message to Paris Seminar on Assistance to Palestinian People.

+ Special Committee begins field mission today to Syria, Jordan and Egypt to review human rights situation in territories occupied by Israel.

+ Li Zhaoxing, new Permanent Representative of China to United Nations, presents his credentials to Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali.

+ Eritrea votes overwhelmingly for independence; referendum was free and fair, says Secretary-General's Special Representative; Secretary-General hopes process will reinforce peace and security in area.

+ World Health Organization declares tuberculosis global emergency, warning that disease will claim 30 million lives in next decade.

+ Attitudes to family unit must be reconsidered because of shifting social trends, President of Malta tells Europe and North America Meeting for Year of Family in 1994; Secretary-General sends message.

+ WHO chooses "Time to Act" as 1993 World Aids Day theme.

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The international community should aid economic and social development in the occupied territories for a lasting settlement in the Middle East, Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali said in a message to the Seminar on Assistance to the Palestinian People. The four-day Seminar began yesterday at United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Headquarters in Paris.

The Secretary-General said the Seminar demonstrated the importance which United Nations Members attached to the question of Palestine. Recent developments in the region, requiring an emergency response to increased

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humanitarian needs of the Palestinians, had placed heavy demands on the United Nations system. While the United Nations programmes had expanded in an effort to accomodate the new circumstances, far more was required, he said.

Addressing the opening session, Ahmed Abu Ala of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) called for international aid for Palestinian schools, hospitals and municipal services. A Palestinian economy under conditions of full political and economic self-determination would be based on the immediate establishment of a Palestinian Development Bank, construction of a Gaza commercial port and industrial zones.

The Seminar is being held at the request of the General Assembly and was organized by the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. It is part of the Committee's effort to mobilize support for the development of occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem.

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The Special Committee investigating Israeli practices in the occupied territories will begin a field mission today to Syria, Jordan and Egypt to review the human rights situation in the territories occupied by Israel. The mission members will, during their two-week trip, collect the testimonies of persons with firsthand experience of the situation.

The Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories is the principal organ of the United Nations mandated to investigate effects of such pratices on the population living in the occupied Syrian Arab Golan, the West Bank including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip. The Committe was established in 1968.

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Li Zhaoxing, the new Permanent Representative of China to the United Nations, today presented his credentials to Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali.

Prior to his appointment, Mr. Li was Assistant Minister for Foreign Affairs of China. Previously, Mr. Li had been Director of the Foreign Ministry's Information Department, First Secretary of China's Embassy in Lesotho, and office staff and attaché of its Embassy in Kenya.

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The people of Eritrea voted overwhelmingly for independence in last weekend's referendum, according to a United Nations spokesman, and the referendum process had been free and fair at every stage, the Secretary-General's Special Representative Samir Sanbar reported, on the basis of an evaluation by the United Nations Mission to Verify the Referendum in Eritrea (UNOVER).

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The Secretary-General was very pleased with the conduct of the referendum and hoped that it would contribute to peace and security in the area, the spokesman said.

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The World Health Organization (WHO) has declared tuberculosis a global emergency, warning that the disease will claim 30 million lives in the next decade unless urgent steps are taken to curb its spread. Every year, 8 million people develop the disease. To find urgent ways to control the disease, the Coordination, Advisory and Review Group of the WHO Tuberculosis Programme last week held a two-day meeting in London.

Addressing the meeting, Dr. Arati Kochi, the manager of the WHO Tuberculosis Programme, said the disease had been grossly neglected in many countries despite the fact that it is preventable and treatable.

Tuberculosis is transmitted by bacteria spread into the air when a patient with active pulmonary tuberculosis -- an infection of the chest -- coughs or sneezes. Dr. Kochi said that modern transporation, migration, and refugees from wars and famines are the reasons why tuberculosis continues to spread in the industrialized as well as the developing world. Although Europe and North America have seen an increase in spread in the past five years, the majority of tuberculosis cases, and 95 per cent of tuberculosis-related deaths, are in the developing world.

According to the WHO Tuberculosis Programme, about $20 million is needed instantly to lay the foundations for effective national control programmes. Another $80 to $100 million would be needed annually to help countries continue those control programmes.

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Attitudes to the family unit must be reconsidered because of shifting social trends, President Vincent Tabone of Malta said yesterday at the opening of the European and North American Preparatory Meeting for the International Year of the Family in 1994. The meeting, which is being held in Valletta, will last until 30 April.

Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, in a message read out to the meeting, said families are at the heart of concerns for a better future, including care for the environment and sustainable development.

The General Assembly proclaimed 1994 the International Year of the Family in 1988 in order to increase awareness of family issues and to promote activities in support of families. There will be another Preparatory Meeting for Asia and the Pacific next month in Beijing, China, and one for Latin America and the Carribbean in August in Cartagena, Colombia.

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The World Health Organization (WHO) has chosen "Time to Act" as the theme for this year's World Aids Day, observed annually on 1 December.

According to the WHO, an estimated 13 million men, women and children have already been infected with the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) that causes the acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS). Without urgent action, AIDS cases could rise to 40 million worldwide, by the end of the century.

By choosing the theme "Time to Act", WHO hopes to focus attention on ensuring that care for people with HIV and AIDS is available everywhere, not just in developed countries. It hopes to fight the denial, discrimination and complacency regarding AIDS among governments, communities and individuals. The WHO calculates that 2.5 billion needs to be spent annually on AIDS prevention in the developing world -- fully 20 times the current sum.

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